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<https://www.bizjournals.com/charlotte/news/2017/12/01/duke-energy-sees-potential-to-expand-the-atlantic.html>

By John Downey — Senior Staff Writer, Charlotte Business Journal

3 hours ago

Duke Energy Corp.'s top natural gas executive tells S.C. regulators he sees "great opportunities" for extending the Atlantic Coast Pipeline into South Carolina — and more N.C. markets — once the initial, 600-plus-mile pipeline is in service.

Frank Yoho, president of Duke's natural gas operations, spoke to the S.C. Public Service Commission Wednesday to update them on progress with the pipeline and with the 14-month-old merger between Duke and Piedmont Natural Gas.

He appeared for an ex-parte briefing — an information session unconnected with any specific case before the commission — with Duke CEO Lynn Good, who spoke about Duke's plans to spend \$3 billion over the next 10 years to modernize its power grid in the state.

First question

While both executives billed their presentations as simple updates for regulators on these issues, it was clear from the first question what was on the mind of the commissioners.

"Mr. Yoho, what's it gonna take to get South Carolina ... on your Atlantic Coast line?" asked commissioner O'Neal Hamilton.

Yoho was encouraging, but noncommittal, according to the commission's transcript.

"The first thing is to get Atlantic Coast Pipeline built," Yoho responded. "And as we know, it's not a long extension to get to other markets, whether it be others in North Carolina or South Carolina."

He emphasized there are no current plans for any extension.

“But the expectation is that, given the benefits of natural gas ... as soon as we can get it built and the markets can justify it I think there are great opportunities” to expand in the Carolinas, he says.

Final permits

The pipeline is designed to carry natural gas east and south from the Marcellus and Utica shale fields that stretch from southern New York to West Virginia. It is slated to start in Clarkston, W.Va., run to the southeast corner of Virginia and then head south through eastern North Carolina, ending northwest of Lumberton, less than 20 miles from the S.C. state line.

Duke (NYSE: DUK) is expected to spend up to \$2.6 billion for its 47% share of the project, which could cost an estimated \$5.5 billion total. The project is controversial with environmental groups, with community activists along most of the route opposing it.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has approved the project. But it still needs some state permits before construction can start. The N.C. Department of Environmental Quality has made a number of requests for additional information. But Dominion Energy, a subsidiary of Dominion Resources (NYSE: D), does not expect the requests to delay final approval.

Yoho said the partners expect to get most — if not all — the necessary state approvals to start construction by the end of the year. The project is slated for completion in the second half of 2019.

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Be kind to all you meet, each of us carries a burden that others cannot see—